



REPRESENTATIONS OF RULERSHIP IN THE LEGENDA AUREA

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Abstract

The thirteenth century is a period of great innovations in the development of political thought. The relationship between temporal and ecclesiastical power became increasingly strained over this period, giving birth to a plethora of new political narratives from the intellectual elite. Many of these new narratives wove Aristotelian philosophy into their theories of power, and indeed their world views. Through analysing the way in which Jacobus de Voragine represents temporal rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea* (The Golden Legend), this research provides insight into the political ideas circulating within popular thought from the thirteenth century. Jacobus' representation of rulership in the *Legenda aurea*, communicates a well-articulated model of traditional Augustinian thought, which would have been an influential source of traditional political thought for the wider population, which ran counter to the papal hierocratic model of power. The way in which Jacobus crafted the bond between temporal and divine spheres is integral to understanding the power and appeal of Jacobus' work within contemporary society. Jacobus' political views were an integral part of the way in which Jacobus conceived of the world in which he lived.

Jacobus' representation temporal of rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea* is a communication of more than a political theory, but an explanation of the divine mechanics which underscored temporal existence.

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Introduction

The relationship between spiritual and temporal power had been a topic of contention since the Investiture Contest in the late eleventh century, escalating further around the turn of the fourteenth century through the dispute between Philip IV of France and Pope Boniface VIII.¹ This period is one which has been deemed by historians as one of great change in the development of political thought. This research will examine a thirteenth-century hagiography in order to gain insight to the philosophical narratives that shaped popular conceptions of power in this time of political innovation.

This dissertation is an exploration of Jacobus de Voragine's collection of hagiographies, the popularity of which has earned it the epithet, the *Legenda aurea* (The Golden Legend). Scholars generally accept the theory that it was intended as an instruction manual for preaching, and sermons, especially within the Dominican order.² Jacobus de Voragine is thought to have been born in Genoa, Italy around 1229.³ After entering the Dominican order in 1244, Jacobus went on to become prior of the Dominicans in Lombardy and towards the end of his life, was elevated to the office of Archbishop of Genoa in 1292 until his death in 1298.⁴ The *Legenda aurea* is thought to have been written from 1260-67, before Jacobus assumed his position as archbishop, although it underwent numerous reviews until his death in 1298.⁵ The *Legenda aurea* was written during a period wherein the relationship between temporal and ecclesiastical powers was greatly contested. The separation of the two spheres, which was the traditional narrative promoted by Augustinian thought, was increasingly challenged by political disputes. The papal line, drawn by Boniface VIII, claimed unimpeded authority over

¹ For discussion of this conflict, see: Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 48-54.

² Alain Boureau, *La Légende dorée*, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1984), 21-25.

³ Steven Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Varagine*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 2.

⁴ Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Varagine*, 2-3.

⁵ Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Varagine*, 3.

both temporal and spiritual affairs. This position was contested by Philip IV who fought for independence against the universal authority claimed by the pope. These disputes had begun in earnest by 1296, at which point Jacobus was still making changes and reviews to his text. This research aims to provide insight into the nature of the Jacobus' political thought by examining the representation of temporal rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea*. In doing so, this research aims to gain insight into the influences that shaped popular conceptions of the role of temporal power throughout this period of conflicting thought.

During this period, these opposing theories of power came to be discussed through the Gelasian metaphor of the two swords. Drawn from Luke 22:38, wherein Christ essentially acknowledges that the two swords are enough to fulfil divine will on earth, the metaphor of the two swords came to represent temporal and spiritual power.⁶ The argument for the dominance of papal power claimed that the Pope, as the vicar of Christ, held both temporal and spiritual swords. Given that the Church was forbidden from wielding any earthly power, this theory conceived of temporal rulers as vassals of the Church, administered to fulfil their role in asserting coercive power. Hence, the Pope held the right to grant power to rulers, as well as to judge and depose them.⁷ This theory was supported by allegorical readings of Matthew 16:19, wherein Christ says to Peter: "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."⁸ This passage, which had been central to the Church's power for centuries, lay at the heart of what scholars have coined the hierocratic theory of power.⁹ The opposing dualist argument, which found support in Augustinian thought,

⁶ "But they said "Lord, behold: here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough." Luke 22:38 *The Vulgate Bible with Douay-Rheims Translation*, ed. Swift Edgar, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010-13), 6 vols, vol. 6, 448-449.

⁷ Joseph Canning, *Ideas of Power in the Late Middle Ages 1296-1417*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 13.

⁸ "Et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum. Et quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in caelis et, quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum in caelis", Matt 16:19, *The Vulgate Bible with Douay-Rheims Translation*, vol. 6, 90-91.

⁹ For examples see: Giles of Rome, *Giles of Rome's On Ecclesiastical Power: A medieval theory of world government: a critical edition and translation*, trans. and ed. by R.W. Dyson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 23-27.; James of Viterbo, *De Regimine Christiano : A Critical Edition and Translation*. Trans. and ed. by James., and R. W. Dyson. (Leiden: Brill, 2009. Accessed November 7, 2017), ProQuest Ebook Central, 111-147.

held that the two powers, or swords, were separate, intended to function in parallel. Although both arguments accepted the position of the Pope as the head of the Christian community, the dualist theory conceived of the two powers existing independent of one another, arguing that the Pope was limited in their rights to interfere in temporal affairs.¹⁰ This argument drew on the traditional interpretation of Matthew 26:52 as evidence that the spheres of power had been intentionally divided by divine will. Examining the way in which Jacobus portrays the role of temporal rulership is the key to understanding the way the *Legenda aurea* engages with contemporary political narratives. It is in this way that this research will gain insight into the way in which Jacobus contributed to popular conceptions of power from the thirteenth century onwards.

The reintroduction of Aristotelian ideas, in the thirteenth century has traditionally been attributed great importance, although many recent historians have forged their own ideas about the evolution of knowledge during this period. Walter Ullmann argued that the thirteenth-century reintroduction of Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics* presented a watershed between medieval and modern political thought.¹¹ Ullmann maintained that the circulation of Aristotelian ideas, that highlight the 'political' man as a natural phenomenon, resulted in the development of naturalistic, populist conceptions of the role of state power.¹² Ullmann's work drew the modernist tradition set by Charles Haskins' earlier in the twentieth century. Charles Haskins' legacy, which Gabrielle Spiegel calls "Medievalism's modernist agenda", was a concentrated effort to revive the relevance of Middle Ages by linking the political and institutional developments of the late Middle Ages with the values inherent within the American democratic systems.¹³ From Haskins' research came "the lesson that medieval monarchies bequeathed to the American present ... the power of government to effect unity and consensus out of fragmentation and discord."¹⁴ Scholars have traditionally been heavily

¹⁰ Canning, *Ideas of Power*, 13. For an example of this dualist argument, see: John (Quidort) of Paris, *On Royal and Papal Power (De regia potestate et papali)*, trans. John A. Watt, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971).

¹¹ Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Political Thought*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), 159, 17. (This text was originally published in 1965 as: *A History of Political Thought: The Middle Ages*.)

¹² Ullmann, *Medieval Political Thought*, 167-169.

¹³ G. M. Spiegel, "In the Mirror's Eye: The Writing of History in America," *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, ed. Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998): 238-62, 241-2.

¹⁴ Gabrielle Spiegel, "In the Mirror's Eye: The Writing of Medieval History in America", 244.

influenced by this modernist agenda, conceiving the reintroduction of Aristotelian ideas as an integral part of the changing conception of the role of temporal rulership. Cary Nederman, illustrating an opposing school of thought, recognises that in fact Aristotelian ideas were not inherently populist, but rather were employed both to challenge and reinforce existing doctrines and power structures.¹⁵ Antony Black also minimises the revolutionary impact of Aristotle, highlighting the prevalence of Ciceronian and Platonic thought to emphasise the continuity apparent within the diverse landscape of late medieval political thought.¹⁶ Given the reverence with which traditional authorities were treated, Aristotelian ideas were not received in blind faith, but rather, through a process of assimilation with Christian theology, and the authorities of early Church fathers, the most prominent being St. Augustine.

Challenging the Traditional Canon of Political Thought

To facilitate an accurate understanding of the nature of political thought during this period it is important to look outside of the traditional source base. The primary source material for historians of political thought has generally been confined to legal works and political tracts that demonstrate the prevalence of Aristotelian thought. Common works include the specialist political works of Giles of Rome, Nicholas of Cusa and Marsilius of Padua, although many more could be highlighted.¹⁷ The work of intellectuals often presents a stark contrast to the

¹⁵ Cary Nederman, *Lineages of European Political Thought. Explorations along the Medieval/Modern Divide from John of Salisbury to Hegel* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 8.

¹⁶ Nederman, "Nature, Sin and the Origins of Society: The Ciceronian Tradition in Medieval Political Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49 (January-March 1988): 3-26; Nederman, "Aristotelianism and the Origins of 'Political Science' in the Twelfth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52 (April-June): 179-94.; Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450*, 9-12, 46.

¹⁷ For Giles of Rome, see: Ullmann, *Medieval Political Thought*, 124, 173, 194; For coverage of Marsilius of Padua, see: Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450*, 56-71; see also: Cary Nederman, "Empire and the Historiography of European Political Thought: Marsiglio of Padua, Nicholas of Cusa, and the Medieval/Modern Divide" *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 66, No 1. (January 2005): 1-15. These present a sample of the many publications that focus on these sources as windows into late medieval thought. Although there is no comprehensive bibliography available to date, John Burns' collection offers an extensive coverage of material published until the 1990s. see: J. H Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

thought prevalent within other sections of society. Reliance on this specialist source base has then been highly limiting in gauging wider social attitudes and political perceptions. Bernard Guenée's work is important for its advocacy of chronicles as a source through which to gain insight into alternative views within the landscape of political thought. He argues that the way in which chronicles construct and manipulate history allows insight into the underlying values and perceptions of the compiler.¹⁸ Both Chris Jones and Elizabeth Brown have made notable contributions to the field in this way, using French chronicles to examine wider social attitudes and perceptions of temporal authority.¹⁹ The treasure trove of different perspectives held by alternative sources has been demonstrated by modern scholarship through gaining insight into the way in which narratives of temporal power were adopted in different areas, by different social groups.²⁰ Thus, this inclination towards using non-traditional sources has been extremely advantageous in offering insight into wider social attitudes outside of the intellectual circles. This dissertation will take this one step further by introducing hagiographical literature as another alternative source base through which to gauge the extent to which the introduction of Aristotelian ideas impacted on conceptions of temporal rulership within the wider population.

Hagiography: A New Approach to Political Thought

The use of hagiographical texts runs contrary to tradition not only in the field of political thought, but within the historical discipline more generally. While the tradition of undervaluing chronicles spans a mere hundred years, the hagiographical sources have endured five hundred years of exclusion from the academic repertoire. This prejudice was first imposed by humanist scholars in the sixteenth century who reproached the superstitious nature of the cult of saints.²¹

¹⁸ Bernard Guenée, "L'Historien et la compilation au XIII^e siècle", *Journal des Savants* (1985), 126.

¹⁹ Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Vincent de Beauvais and the *reditus regni francorum ad stirpem Caroli Imperatoris*," *Vincent de Beauvais: Intentions et réceptions d'une oeuvre encyclopédique au Moyen Âge*. ed. Monique Paulmier-Foucart, Serge Lusignan and Alain Nadeau, (Paris: Caheirs d'études médiévales, Cahier special 4, 1990): 167-196; Chris Jones, "Geoffroi of Courlon and Political Perceptions in late Medieval France", *Viator*, 1. (2016): 153-189. Jones, "Historical Understanding and the Nature of Temporal Power in the Thought of John of Paris" *Eclipse of Empire? Perceptions of the Western Empire and its Rulers in Late Medieval France* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007): 77-118.

²⁰ For example: Len Scales, *The Shaping of German Identity: Authority and Crisis, 1245-1414*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 115, 146.

²¹ Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, in *The Essential Erasmus*, ed. and trans. John Dolan. (New York: Montor Omega Books, 1964), 129. For further discussion see Sherry L. Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination of Its*

The first to make an attempt at the redemption of the genre was the Jesuit scholar Jean Bolland (1596 – 1665), during the Counter-Reformation.²² Bolland introduced a new approach to hagiographical texts, engaging with them through the critical methods of scientific interrogation typical of contemporary philological methods.²³ His goal, which was continued by the Bollandists who succeeded him, was to find the ‘truth’ within the texts by identifying the core source from which each saint’s life was derived, therefore rendering the fictitious derivative texts as superfluous. For Bolland, truth could be found within hagiographies by stripping back the layers of historical augmentation and myth making that tend to characterise *vitae* to expose the ‘real lives’ of the saints. This approach to hagiographical sources continued to dominate the historiographical tradition, until the rise of positivist scholarship in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, which devalued hagiographies even further. Departing from both the Bollandist and positivist approaches, this research focuses on the way in which Jacobus constructs his image of temporal rulers through the hagiography, and the way in which the *Legenda aurea* was crafted to shape popular conceptions of rulership.

The *Legenda Aurea* has a lot to offer as a historical source. For the purposes of this research, it will be used to as a window into understanding development of popular perceptions of power and authority in the thirteenth century. The *Legenda Aurea* is thought to be the most widely read book second only to the Bible during the thirteenth century;²⁴ evidence of its popularity is apparent due to the sheer number of manuscripts that have survived, which is near a thousand.²⁵ Its popularity is but an indication of its influence in shaping wider social attitudes and perceptions during this period. This is not to say the image of temporal authority conveyed throughout the *Legenda Aurea* is an accurate reflection of dominant social perceptions or

Paradoxical History, (Madison, WI and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 29; Jan M. Sawilla, “Antiquarianismus, Hagiographie und Historie im 17 Jahrhundert: Zum Werk der Bollandisten. Ein Wissenschaftshistorischer Versuch,” *Studien und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur und Kultur im europäischen Kontext. Frühe Neuzeit*, 131. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2009), 411; Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, trans. Donald Attwater (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1962), 181.

²² Donald Sullivan “Jean Bolland (1596-1665) and the Early Bollandists,” *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the transformation of a Discipline*, vol. 1, ed. Helen Damico and Joseph B. Zavadil (London: Garland Publishing, 1995), 5.

²³ Donald Sullivan “Jean Bolland (1596-1665) and the Early Bollandists”, 5.

²⁴ William Ryan Granger, “Introduction”, xiii.

²⁵Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination of Its Paradoxical History*, (Madison, WI and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 4-10; William Granger Ryan, “Introduction”, xiii.

attitudes. Its popularity is however, an indication that the political ideas propagated through the *Legenda aurea* were both well known, and well received by a popular audience.

Although hagiographical studies have blossomed within the last few decades, the general focus has been on the cult of saints itself.²⁶ This dissertation will contribute to the burgeoning scholarship advocating for the redemption of hagiographical texts as historical sources, and more specifically to a growing field of specialist scholarship on the *Legenda Aurea*. Given the longstanding treatment of hagiographical material within the historical tradition, it is not surprising that one of the first to draw attention to it was a literary scholar. Sherry Reames has become one of the leading authorities on the *Legenda aurea*. Her work offers extensive coverage of the textual tradition and reception of the text, as well as several case studies on specific *vitae*.²⁷ Reames begins an exploration of the way in which Jacobus conceived of political ideas, arguing that this text presents “an effort to reverse the drift towards modern, secular values ... in effect ... rebuilding the authority of the Church”.²⁸ Although she offers valuable insight into the way in which Dominican ideals shaped Jacobus’ views, she does not take her exploration beyond the basic premise that Jacobus supported the independence of the clergy, and the superiority of papal authority, a view which is unsurprising given his position. Given that Reames does not attempt to synthesis these ideas beyond a selective case studies of particular *vitae*, she has left a gap that this thesis aims to address.

There are two other notable studies published that have provided a base for this research. The most recent, by Steven Epstein, considers the *Legenda Aurea*, Jacobus’ various sermons and his relatively little-known chronicle on the history of Genoa, offering a base for exploring his treatment of temporal rulers, and his patterns of thought further.²⁹ Epstein’s study portrays a broad understanding of Jacobus’ works, and more specifically, the way in which both his immediate historical context, and the precepts of theology informed Jacobus’ thought.

²⁶ For example: Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); André Vauchez. *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); André Vauchez, “The Saint”, in Jacques Le Goff (ed.), *Medieval Callings*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990): 313-45; Lawrence Cunningham, *The Meaning of Saints*, (Cambridge: Harper and Row, 1980).

²⁷ For an account of the history and reception of the *Legenda Aurea*, see: Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination*, 11-72; for specific case studies see the same text, 117-163, and Sherry L. Reames, “Saint Martin of Tours in the *Legenda Aurea* and Before” *Viator* 12 (1981), 131-64.

²⁸ Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination*, 133.

²⁹ Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Varagine*, 8-9.

The conclusions drawn throughout this work are based on a more nuanced understanding of Jacobus' work than Reames.³⁰ Epstein and Reames both discuss the influence of Augustine on Jacobus' work, however, neither attempt to align Jacobus within the landscape of thirteenth-century political thought.³¹ In doing so, this research aims to gauge the extent to which Augustinian ideas impacted on Jacobus' political thought, and draw out the wider significance of this within a period wherein Augustine was not the only authority on which contemporaries drew from.

The works of the late Jacques Le Goff have long been an asset to understanding the nature of medieval thought. His contribution to the scholarship on the *Legenda aurea* is no different. Throughout his work, he accentuates the way in which Jacobus consciously forged a strong relationship between the mundane events of temporal affairs and divine power.³² Le Goff argues that Jacobus was consciously constructing this relationship through the entire structure of his text, which Le Goff argues is created as a *summa* of time.³³ Although the prevalence of this relationship may at first glance be perceived as incidental to Jacobus' position as a Dominican friar, Le Goff's argument highlights that it was a product of a deliberation rather than a product of his position or his time. The fact that Jacobus would go to such lengths to create such a strong relationship, presupposed there being a purpose to his efforts. Hence, this research takes this as a starting point in exploring the way in which Jacobus actively constructed the relationship between divine and temporal power.

The way in which the *Legenda aurea* portrays the relationship between temporal rulers and the people over whom they rule, as well as that between temporal and ecclesiastical powers reveals a lot about the nature of Jacobus' political thought. Hence, the first part of this dissertation is dedicated to understanding the way in which Jacobus conceived of the role of

³⁰ See in particular: Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Varagine*, 197-210.

³¹ Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Varagine*, 134-8, Sherry Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination*, 135-163.

³² Jacques Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time: Jacobus de Voragine and the Golden Legend*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 22-4, 51-2.

³³ Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred Time*, 173-5.

temporal rulers in relation to these two powers. The model of good rulership portrayed by Jacobus highlights a clear set of obligations within each of these relationships, and a clear role for the temporal ruler, supported by a distinctly traditional theory of power. This is followed by a chapter dedicated to understanding the way in which Jacobus conceived of the nature of good temporal rulership. The distinction between good and bad rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea*, is inextricably linked with Christian moral theology. This research reveals the extent to which Jacobus consciously constructed the representation of rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea* to promote his theory of power.

CHAPTER ONE

A Divine Purpose: Jacobus de Voragine On the Role of Temporal Rulership

As the shaping force of political thought, before the reintroduction of Aristotelian ideas in the mid-thirteenth-century, the authority of the Church Fathers had a massive impact on the way in which Jacobus conceived of the role of temporal rulership. In order to gain further insight into the nature of Jacobus' political thought, this chapter will adopt a two-step approach, examining the way in which Jacobus portrays the relationship between both temporal rulers and the people over whom they ruled, and between the ruler and the Church. Jacobus' theory of power follows a very traditional pattern of thought, providing a logical and clear delineation of the role of the temporal ruler in both of these relationships.

A Mutual Bond of Servitude: Temporal Rulers and the People

The relationship between temporal rulers and the people over whom they govern, lies at the heart of Jacobus' political thought. Although the loyalty of the Christian people ultimately lies with God, Jacobus portrays the bond of servitude that ties the people to their rulers as divinely ordained. The ruler's role in administering justice plays an important role in facilitating earthly peace, and securing the salvation of the Christian community. This eschatological function of temporal power makes rulers a central part of the Christian world order, regardless of the nature of their rule.

Although Augustine was not consciously trying to develop a political theory,³⁴ his work, which was a blend of classical politics and Christian theology, proved a valuable authority for Jacobus and his contemporaries. As a source which guaranteed abidance by Christian theological precepts, Augustine was the perfect authority to draw on for guidance in comprehending both the origins of, and the authority of temporal rulership. Augustine argues that temporal rulership became necessary only because of original sin, without which, humanity would still be living in righteousness and enjoying untarnished peace.³⁵ According to Augustine:

The first cause of servitude is sin, by which man was placed under man in a condition of bondage: a condition which can come about only by the judgement of God, in whom there is no injustice, and Who knows how to distribute different punishments according to the merits of the offenders.³⁶

This passage highlights two important features of Augustinian thought that remained of central importance to Jacobus, and indeed the wider sphere of late medieval political thought. The first of which, is that temporal rulers, and by extension the bond between the people and their ruler, is divinely ordained. This condition of servitude was, for Augustine, the penance prescribed by God as a consequence of original sin, and a necessary part of establishing order.³⁷ The second point follows directly on from this. It is because of the divinely ordained nature of temporal

³⁴ John Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's City of God*, (London: Longmans Green and co, 1964). 54. For an older, alternative view, see T. Sommerlad, *Das Wirtschaftsprogramm der Kirche des Mittelalters: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Nationalökonomie und zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des ausgehenden Alferturns*, (Liepzig: Weber, 1903), 216.

³⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 942-944. For discussion of Augustine's conception of original sin, see: Figgis, *The Political Aspects of Augustine's City of God*, 52. and Henry Chadwick, *Augustine*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 22-39, 52.

³⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 943.

³⁷ "Order, for Augustine, is 'that which, if we follow it in our lives, will lead us to God'. Being part of the all-embracing order in the world, human society is one of the stages of man's advance towards God." R. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970), 78.

rulership that a ruler's actions are seen to have been chosen by God in accordance to the merits of those who over whom they rule. The coercive power wielded by rulers was then a necessary part of humanity's existence in a fallen world. The role of temporal rulership in establishing order meant, for Augustine, that even a tyrant was to be obeyed.³⁸ They were after all, an instrument of divine punishment and the embodiment of divine justice.

The portrayal of "bad" rulers in the *Legenda aurea* clearly adheres to this traditional Augustinian model of thought. For Jacobus, the authority of temporal rulership was legitimate, regardless of the nature of the ruler. Emperors Diocletian (244-311) and Maximian (286-305) are two of the central antagonists in the *Legenda aurea*, consistently portrayed as the epitome of bad rulership. In the *vitae* of Saint Maurice and his companions, Jacobus recounts Diocletian and Maximian's attempt to eradicate Christianity.³⁹ Despite the unjust nature of their rule, Jacobus makes quite clear that the people are still obliged to render their services to them due to the divinely ordained nature of their power. "The emperors' letters [which demanded military service] were delivered to the people of Thebes, and these people, *in obedience to God's command*, rendered to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's".⁴⁰ The nature of their rulership is not shown to affect the legitimacy of their power. Indeed, the divinely ordained nature of temporal power meant that the people were bound to obey a ruler's commands. The point at which Jacobus condones disobedience to the authority of temporal rulers, is when they command the Christian soldiers of Thebes to renounce the

³⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 961-2, Chadwick, *Augustine*, 101. Figgis, *The Political Aspects of Augustine's City of God*, 62-3

³⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 189. For the persecution of Christians during the reign of Diocletian and Maximian, see: Steven Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 55-62.

⁴⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 189-90. (Italics mine) For a discussion on the historicity of accounts such as this, see Jill Harries, *Imperial Rome AD 284 to 363: The New Empire*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 86-7.

Christian faith.⁴¹ This demand for apostasy is a clear violation of divine law, and the point at which the story makes clear that, although the people are duty bound to obey the ruler, the service owed to God always trumps that which is owed to temporal rulers.⁴² Jacobus' conception of Christians obediently enduring the rule of a tyrant abides by the Augustinian conception of bad rulers as instruments of divine punishment, necessary for the establishment of earthly order.⁴³

Regardless of the individual nature of the ruler, temporal rulership played an integral role within the wider Christian framework. Hence, the eschatological function of the ruler's administration of justice serves a higher purpose, one inextricably linked to the Final Judgement. The significance of the eschatological role of temporal rulership is highly influenced by the contemporary conceptions of universal history. This conception of history, that spread from Creation, to Final Judgement, provided a sense of connectivity and community within contemporary society.⁴⁴ The key role of temporal rulership was to facilitate earthly peace for the benefit of the entire Christian community.⁴⁵ Jacobus notes that "[t]he Lord shows that peace is necessary for the receiving of the Holy Spirit",⁴⁶ through which humans are

⁴¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 190.

⁴² This basic position is consistent throughout both Augustine's early and later thought. For a discussion on the differences in Augustine's thought, see: R. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 86-91.

⁴³ Chadwick, *Augustine*, 101.

⁴⁴ John Burrow, *A History of Histories*, (London: Penguin, 2007), 183; For more on the development of this tradition, see: Michael Allen, "Universal History 300-1000: Origins and Western Development", *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. Deborah Deliyannis, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 17-42.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 945-46: "... the earthly city, which does not live by faith, desires an earthly peace, order to secure a kind of cooperation of men's wills for the sake of attaining the things which belong to this mortal life. But the Heavenly city – or rather that part of it which is a pilgrim in this condition of mortality, and which lives by the faith – must of necessity make use of this peace also, until this mortal state, for which such peace is necessary, shall have passed away." For a discussion of these ideas in Augustine's thought, see: R. Markus, *Saeculum*, 71-89.

⁴⁶ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 307.

endowed with the wisdom to live righteously through Christian virtue in anticipation of final judgement. Temporal rulers then played an integral role in preparing the wider Christian community throughout their earthly existence, hence enabling the redemption of Christian souls at the impending final judgement. The significance of justice to the relationship between temporal rulers and their people is then doubly important when conceived within this framework.

The distinguishing feature that distinguishes good rulership from bad in the *Legenda aurea*, is the effective administration of justice. The ideal model of temporal justice is based on a mutual bond of servitude between the ruler and the people over whom they rule through their role in administering justice. In one of his etymological passages, wherein Jacobus offers insight into his perception of the significance of the saint, Jacobus makes his conception of justice explicit: “Saint Justina showed her justice by giving to every person what was due to the person...”⁴⁷ This is a clear demonstration of Augustinian justice, drawn from classical Ciceronian thought.⁴⁸ A good Christian ruler, who was bound by the virtue of justice, was as much in a state of servitude as those over whom he ruled. Augustine says that in the earthly city, “...commands are given by those who care for the rest ...[a]nd those who are cared for obey ... In the household of a just man, however, who ‘lives by faith’ and who is still a pilgrim on the way to that Heavenly city, even those who command are the servants of those whom they seem to command.”⁴⁹ This stipulates that while the people were obliged to obey their ruler, the rulers were also in a state of servitude to the people over whom they ruled. Jacobus shares

⁴⁷ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 192.

⁴⁸ “... justice is that virtue which gives to each his due.” Augustine, *The City of God against the pagans*, 951.

This conception of justice originates in Classical thought, see Cicero, *De Inventione De optimo genere oratorum Topica* Cicero, trans. H. M. Hubbell, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), II, 52-161.

⁴⁹ Augustine, *The City of God*, 942.

this conception of the relationship between a good ruler and those over whom he governs as a mutual relationship of servitude.

The way in which Jacobus portrays the relationship between temporal rulership and the people over whom he rules is saturated by traditional Augustinian thought. As the authoritative synthesis of Christian theology and classical politics, Augustine's thought remained of central importance to Jacobus. Jacobus conceived of humanity's condition of servitude as a mutual bond determined by divine law. It is through this bond that the people are subordinated to temporal rulers. Yet this relationship is mutual between a good ruler and his people, who is just as bound by duty to serve, as the people over whom they rule. For Jacobus, the key role of temporal rulership in service to the people, was to administer justice. Given the divinely ordained nature of their power, this was a function which was upheld by temporal rulers regardless of the nature of their reign. However, Jacobus conceives of true justice as dependant on divine wisdom, as communicated through the Holy Spirit. Hence, Jacobus' ideal model of rulership upholds divine law, performing an essential function in facilitating the righteous existence of the Christian community in preparation for the Final Judgement.

Who Dares Judge Thee: Temporal Rulers and the Church

The way in which Jacobus illustrates relationship between temporal and ecclesiastical powers relationship is integral to positioning his thought within the wider landscape of thirteenth-century political ideas. Examining the way in which Jacobus portrays rulers who had recently fallen into conflict with the Church, provides insight into the way in which Jacobus conceives of the role of temporal rulership. Jacobus portrays the expectation that a good temporal ruler should defend the Church, including her property and liberties, all of which were seen to fall under the jurisdiction of the pope as the head of the Church. The *Legenda aurea*,

portrays a clear divide between the jurisdiction of these two powers. Although Jacobus clearly conceived of the pope as the head of the Church, the relationship between the two powers was more complex, promoting a traditional model of thought.

The key fault of bad temporal rulers throughout the *Legenda aurea*, is the failure to defend the Church. The way in which Jacobus portrays the conflict between King Henry II and Saint Thomas Becket (1118-1170) sheds insight on the way in which he conceives of the relationship between temporal rulers and the clergy. Jacobus recounts that "... the king made every effort to bend Thomas to his will at the expense of the Church. He wanted the archbishop to confirm certain customs that were contrary to the Church's liberties, as his predecessors had done ..."⁵⁰ The customs spoken of here reference the efforts of Henry II (1133-1189) to restrict the independence of the English clergy, through the Constitutions of Clarendon, the aim of which was essentially to bring English clergy under the jurisdiction of the English king.⁵¹ Jacobus clearly conceived of these actions as indicative of bad temporal rulership. The final words spoken by Thomas, before he was crowned a martyr, highlight the just nature of his refusal: "I am ready to die for God, to defend justice, and to protect the freedom of the Church."⁵² Protection of the independence of the Church is not the only expectation Jacobus holds for temporal rulers. The protection of Church property was another of the prominent

⁵⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 60.

⁵¹ "If a controversy concerning advowson and presentation of churches arise between laymen, or between laymen and clerks, or between clerks, it shall be treated of and terminated in the court of the lord king ... Churches of the fee of the lord king cannot, unto all time, be given without his assent and concession ... It is not lawful for archbishops, bishops, and persons of the kingdom to go out of the kingdom without the permission of the lord king." in "Constitution of Clarendon, 1164", *Avalon Project: Documents in History, Law and Diplomacy*, Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, accessed 12 Nov 2017, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/medieval/constcla.asp>. Cited from William Stubbs, *Select Charters and Illustrations of English Constitutional History from the earliest times to the reign of Edward the First*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881). For a recent discussion of Thomas Becket and the Constitution of Clarendon, see: Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48-58.

⁵² Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 61.

obligations Jacobus held of good temporal rulers. In the *vitae* of Saint Ambrose, he distinguishes between the rights of the ruler and the Church, in relation to Church property: “... we are under pressure from the royal demands: but our resolve is strengthened by scripture. Emperor ... do not burden yourself with the thought that you have any right to the thing’s which are God’s. Palaces belong to the emperor, churches to the priests.”⁵³ This passage clearly delineates between the spheres of temporal and spiritual power, at least in regarding to property, as supported by scripture and divine will.

When addressing the reign of Emperor Otto III (980-1002) in his short chronicle titled “The History of the Lombards”, Jacobus constructs a story which clearly deviates from historical truth, offering clear insight into the way in which he conceived of the power relations between temporal rulers and the Church. Jacobus recounts that Otto’s wife had attempted to prostitute herself to a local count.⁵⁴ When the count refused, she denounced him to the emperor who subsequently had him executed without trial. When the count’s widow confronted the emperor, she endured the ordeal of iron to demonstrate the truth of her word.

“Seeing this done the emperor was overwhelmed and offered himself to the woman to be punished. The prelate and princes intervened however ... Then the emperor, having examined the case and discovered the truth, condemned his wife to death by fire, and as ransom for himself gave the widow four burgs.”⁵⁵

In this particular case, the emperor’s wife was given her justice by being sentenced death by fire, which provides purification through death, and the widow was given her justice by being granted four settlements. Given that Otto never married,⁵⁶ this story indicates that Jacobus

⁵³ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 234.

⁵⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 380.

⁵⁵ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 380.

⁵⁶ Adelbert Davids, “Marriage Negotiations between Byzantium and the West and the name of Theophano in Byzantium (eighth to tenth centuries)” *The Empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the turn of the First Millenium*, ed. Adelbert Davids (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 99-120, 109.

constructed this story purely to make a point. Rulers who err, due to ignorance, then redeem themselves by admitting their fault and offering recompense, are then enabled to fulfil their role in administering justice. Hence, this story reveals an important point about the nature of Jacobus' conception of the power relations between the Church and the emperor, indicating a traditional model of dualist thought.

The only point at which popes condone the deposition of temporal rulers, is when a ruler does not honour their obligations to defend the Church. Jacobus' treatment of another from the Ottonian line, Otto IV (1175-1218) reveals an underlying judgement of the actions of the emperor. Jacobus recounts how Pope Innocent III was opposed to the succession of Philip, brother of Henry VI, choosing instead to support Otto IV as emperor.⁵⁷ Jacobus notes that in return, Innocent obtained from him "an oath that he would safeguard the rights of the Church."⁵⁸ This was not long lived, as Otto rescinded his oath in favour of expanding his imperial power over the Papal States. Jacobus notes that "Otto violated his oath on the very day he took it, and ordered the pillaging of pilgrims on their way to Rome: the pope excommunicated him and deposed him from the empire."⁵⁹ Due to the oath sworn by Otto, Innocent is in a unique position to defend his actions in deposing him. This demonstrates that although Jacobus does concede limited rights to the Pope, in deposing rulers, that it can only be at the point at which rulers encroached on the rights of the Church.

Jacobus has a clear, and limited, conception of the extent to which temporal rulers can intervene in Church affairs. The reign of Jacobus' near contemporary, the thirteenth-century emperor Frederick II is addressed in the *vita* of Saint Bartholomew, wherein Jacobus relates

⁵⁷ For more information on the dispute between Innocent II and Otto IV, see: James Powell "Innocent III and the Crusade", *Innocent III: Vicar of Christ or Lord of the World?* 2nd ed. ed. James Powell (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1994):121-134, 121.

⁵⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 384.

⁵⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 384.

a story about his sacking of Benevento.⁶⁰ Having displaced the saints who had presided over the churches, including Bartholomew, this act prompted them to gather to deliberate on Frederick's punishment: "They have arrived at an unalterable sentence: that man must go before God's judgement seat without delay, to answer to God, the Judge for all those deeds! A short time later, the emperor came to a miserable end."⁶¹ Epstein has rightly identified Frederick II as Jacobus' favourite villain.⁶² This is no surprise given the disputes between Frederick II and Pope Innocent IV over control of the papal states.⁶³ The punishment chosen by the saints highlights the unjust nature of rulers who infringe on the jurisdiction of the Church, and the subsequent role of divine justice in determining his fate. This passage, and the treatment of Frederick II throughout the *vitae* allows insight into the nature of Jacobus' political thought, highlighting his support for papal claims for jurisdiction over the papal states. It does not however, present a hierocratic thesis, wherein the ruler's power is determined by the Pope, but rather clarifies his dualist position regarding the jurisdiction of both temporal and ecclesiastical power.

The primary function of a good temporal ruler is to administer temporal justice. For Jacobus, this includes defending the Church, including its property and liberties. Jacobus' conception of the relationship between temporal and Church powers, is that each was to function within the limitations inherent within their own jurisdiction. His support for papal independence from temporal rulers, which is revealed rather strikingly throughout the *vitae*, fails to reveal any hierocratic theory of power informing Jacobus' political thought. Instead,

⁶⁰ Benevento has an important place within Italian history as a papal enclave, and played an important role in defending the papacy throughout the conflict of the late twelfth century. For further discussion, see: David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 53-57.

⁶¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 113. It is worth noting here that Frederick II died what was undoubtedly an unpleasant death due to dysentery.

⁶² Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Voragine*, 156.

⁶³ For further discussion of these conflicts, see: Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor*, 340-307.

Jacobus portrays a traditional dualist position, which would ideally have each of the two powers functioning in parallel to one another within their respective jurisdiction.

CHAPTER TWO

From Virtue to Vice: Jacobus de Voragine on the Nature of Temporal Rulership

Moral theology has an important role to play in determining the nature of temporal rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea*. In order to provide further insight into the nature of Jacobus' political thought, and the message it was communicating to its audience, this research will examine Jacobus' use of moral theology in representing the ideal of good rulership, and the flawed model of bad rulership. Through this examination, this research will gauge the extent to which Jacobus' image of rulership was influenced by changing Aristotelian thought.

On the Nature of Virtue: Good Rulership

The virtues are the key to understanding the way in which Jacobus conceived of the nature of good temporal rulership. Through examining the way in which Jacobus communicates the nature of the virtues, and their relationship to rulers throughout the *Legenda aurea*, insight will be gained into the philosophical influences which shaped Jacobus' political thought. Jacobus' application of the virtues presents a clear role for them in determining the nature of a ruler. The relationship Jacobus establishes between a good ruler, and the Christian virtues is integral to understanding the way in which a temporal ruler was to fulfil their role within the Christian world order.

Although Ambrose (337-397) was the first to address the cardinal virtues, and to name them as such, it was Saint Augustine who provided the model for the way in which the cardinal virtues were commonly perceived throughout the Middle Ages. Discerning the complexity of Augustine's thought is not the purpose of this research and would prove to be a lengthy exercise that would entail examining his thought across his numerous works. Luckily, a brief delineation of his conception of the virtues is sufficient to provide a base through which to examine the relative nature of Jacobus' thought. These virtues were inseparable from the Christian framework; virtues are not true virtues without the Christian faith. For Augustine, "... a brief

and true definition of virtue is ‘rightly ordered love’.⁶⁴ Augustine presented the virtues as tools through which to counter earthly vices in preparation for the afterlife, at which point, the virtues can exist in their true form unhindered by earthly temptation.⁶⁵ The cardinal virtues are conceived as the essence of the Christian love of God, each being inseparable from each other. Augustinian thought held that the virtues could only serve their relative functions when informed by the correct direction of Christian love, which was directed at God as opposed to the self.⁶⁶ Augustine conceives of prudence as the virtue which teaches one to distinguish between good and evil.⁶⁷ Fortitude is the ability to remain steadfast in faith in the face of adversity.⁶⁸ Temperance, he describes as “the virtue which bridles the lusts of the flesh and prevents them from securing the consent of the mind and dragging it into every kind of wickedness.”⁶⁹ Justice is defined in classical terms as the virtue that drives one to give each his due.⁷⁰ While Augustine’s thought was strongly determined by a Christian worldview, the classical Aristotelian conception of the virtues was devoid of any such theological framework.

Aristotelian ideas were challenging many traditional narratives within the context of thirteenth-century political thought. These new ideas were equally as influential in challenging traditional theological notions, even within the Dominican order. Thomas Aquinas’ treatment of the moral virtues in *Summa Theologiae*, is but one well known example of the way in which Aristotelian thought was challenging the boundaries of Christian theology. Synthesising the Aristotelian and Augustinian conceptions of moral theology is a fundamental theme throughout Aquinas’ work.⁷¹ The Aristotelian conception of the cardinal virtues divorces the realms of religion and philosophy, although it remained an important source for Augustine’s thought on moral theology, through the work of Cicero. Aristotle defines his conception of the cardinal virtues, stating that “... the virtues do not come to us either by nature or contrary to nature, but it is natural to us to be receptive of them, and we are perfected in them through habit ...

⁶⁴ Augustine, *The City of God against the pagans*, 680.

⁶⁵ Augustine, *The City of God against the pagans*, 963. For discussion see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 146-157.

⁶⁶ Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, 961.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *The City of God against the pagans*, 921-22.

⁶⁸ Augustine, *The City of God against the pagans*, 921-22.

⁶⁹ Augustine, *The City of God against the pagans*, 920.

⁷⁰ Augustine, *The City of God against the pagans*, 921-22. See discussion in Chapter 1.

⁷¹ For a focused study on the nature of Aquinas’ conception of virtues, see: J. Budziszewski, *Commentary of Thomas Aquinas’s Virtue Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3, 19.

legislators make citizens good by habituating them.”⁷² He treats the virtues as the ideal of human behaviour that allows for the peaceful co-existence of political communities.

Given the prominence of these new Aristotelian ideas, the question to ask is, to what extent was Jacobus influenced by these new ideas? An examination of the representation of good pagan kingship is the perfect way to gain insight into whether or not the virtues are in fact virtues if they are not informed by Christian love. The case of Emperor Trajan (98- 117) is the ideal case study for this specific point. Trajan is a rarity in that he was the subject of a popular legend, depicted as one of good pagan rulers.⁷³ The cardinal virtues are, for Jacobus, the key to effective rulership. Jacobus’ image of effective temporal rulership is often characterised by the display of humility. Humility is demonstrated throughout the *Legenda Aurea* by rulers who subject themselves both to the law and to their subjects. This is an example set by Christ, in “...that he, the master of the Law, subjected himself to Law”.⁷⁴ Christ then presents a twofold expression of humility, subjecting oneself to an inferior, and subjecting oneself to divine law. This display of humility in turn enables rulers to fulfil their correct role in administering temporal justice. In Jacobus’ account of Trajan, an act of justice, informed by what appears to be an act of humility, through subjection of oneself to an inferior, earns even a pagan some semblance of salvation. On his way to war, Trajan was confronted by a widow who had lost her son to the recklessness of his son.⁷⁵ In response to this, Trajan offered his son as a replacement, a son for a son.⁷⁶ Despite the eternally damned nature of Trajan’s pagan soul, this

⁷² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics: Books II-IV*, trans. and intro. C Taylor, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2-3. This conception of perfecting the virtues is one which Augustine did not support, given his belief that virtue can only be perfected in heaven, after the temptation of concupiscence could no longer tempt the flesh. Augustine did, however, share with Aristotle the classical belief in the benefit of habituating positive behaviour. For further discussion, see: Timo Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 312.

⁷³ The Legend of Trajan was one which was engaged with both Thomas Aquinas, and Dante, both of whom struggle in coming to terms with the nature of the emperor’s fate. For more on the transmission and reception of Trajan’s Legend, see: Peter G. Bietenholz, *Historia and Fabula: Myths and Legends in Popular Thought from Antiquity to the Modern Age*, (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 76-79.

⁷⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 75.

⁷⁵ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 178.

⁷⁶ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 178.

emperor is redeemed from damnation because of Gregory's prayers for him.⁷⁷ This case exemplifies the value Jacobus places on rulers subjecting themselves to their inferiors, as an important part of the relationship between the ruler and his people. This case also presents a problematic deviation from traditional Augustinian thought, as Trajan's actions are not directed by Christian love. It is telling, that Jacobus does not describe Trajan as either humble or just. Indeed, Jacobus considers this as an act of "benevolence", instead of a manifestation of any virtue. Jacobus appears uncomfortable concluding that Trajan was spared eternal punishment, recounting the views of several differing authorities.⁷⁸ This illustrates Jacobus' efforts to assimilate this exceptional pagan ruler into his Augustinian model of thought: that a ruler is only able to possess virtue if informed by the correct Christian love.

This Augustinian conception of virtue, is what comes to define the nature of good rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea*. Prudence in its basic form, is the intellectual virtue which allows the insight to discern right from wrong, good from evil. It is also an essential part of ensuring a ruler is aware of his role in relation to divine power. The way in which Jacobus recounts the story of the pagan emperor Augustus (BC27-AD14), the first emperor of the Roman Empire, gives a clear indication of the role of prudence in informing good rulers. In the chapter on 'The Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ', Jacobus fabricates an interesting story about Augustus and the manifestation of the nativity of Christ. Jacobus recounts that Augustus: "brought the whole world under Roman rule, and the Senate was so well pleased that they wished to worship him as a god ... the prudent emperor however, knowing full well he was mortal, refused to usurp the title of immortality."⁷⁹ It is at this point, as Augustus demonstrates his prudence that the birth of Christ was revealed to him: "At midday a golden circle appeared around the sun, and in the middle of the circle, a most beautiful virgin holding a child ... [t]he emperor, understanding that the child he had seen was greater than he, he offered incense to

⁷⁷ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 178: "One day many years after that emperor's death, as Gregory was crossing through Trajan's forum, the emperor's kindness came to his mind and he went to Saint Peter's basilica and lamented the ruler's errors with bitter tears."

⁷⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 179: "On this subject some have said that Trajan was restored to life, and in this life obtained grace and merited pardon: thus he attained glory and was not finally committed to hell nor definitively sentenced to eternal punishment. There are others who have said that Trajan's soul was not simply freed from being sentenced to eternal punishment, but that his sentence was simply suspended for a time, namely, until the day of the Last Judgment. ..."

⁷⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 40.

him and refused to be called God.⁸⁰ This display of subordination to divine power is what confirms Augustus' display of prudence and determines Jacobus' view of him as a good ruler. Prudence is not only about accepting the correct faith, but rather a virtue which indicates a ruler's acceptance of their subordinate role in relation to divine power, and submission to divine law. This example is a characteristic that defines good from bad rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea*.⁸¹

Fortitude is the virtue which teaches strength of faith, or patience in the face of adversity. Although this is a characteristic typical of saints or religious figures who suffer martyrdom, Jacobus also clearly communicates the value of this virtue to good rulers. Fortitude is shown to inform good rulers as they demonstrate constancy of faith and strength of will in their role. Jacobus begins the *vitae* of Saint Patrick without his usual etymological passage. The scene opens with St. Patrick preaching to the king of the Scots:

By accident he [St. Patrick] put the sharp point of the staff on the king's foot and so pierced the foot. The king thought that the Holy Bishop had done this deliberately and that he himself could not receive the faith of Christ otherwise than by suffering like this for Christ, so he born the pain patiently.⁸²

This demonstration of fortitude earns this king a good portrayal even having blessings bestowed on his kingdom. From that point on, Jacobus notes that "... no poisonous reptile could live in the whole province: and it is said ... that the bark from the trees in that region effectively counteract poison".⁸³ Temporal rulers are expected to bear their role patiently, remaining steadfast in their faith so as to best serve the community as a whole. Being informed by fortitude, is integral to the role of an effective ruler throughout the *Legenda aurea*.

The precepts of moral theology have been shown to be an integral part of understanding the way in which Jacobus crafted his model of rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea*. Jacobus actively applied his in-depth knowledge of Augustine's moral theology, to illustrate his conception of what constitutes good rulership. Each of the lessons offered by the virtues play a key role in assuring a ruler can fulfil their role effectively; Humility teaches a ruler to submit to divine law and to the people over whom he governs; Prudence is the intellectual virtue that

⁸⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 40.

⁸¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*: For examples see, the king of Lybia, vol. I, 238-40; the queen of the pagan Persians vol. I, 241-2; and Maxentius' queen vol. II, 337-8.

⁸² Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 193-4.

⁸³ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 194.

teaches how to distinguish good from evil, through acceptance of Christian truth, and fortitude gives rulers the strength to endure their role. Together, these virtues ensure that temporal rulers are able to fulfil their primary role: to administer justice to the people. While the *Legenda Aurea* may not offer direct advice on temporal rulership, as would a traditional ‘mirror for princes’,⁸⁴ it offers a clear perspective on the appropriate behaviour of secular rulers through the application of Augustinian moral theology. Despite the circulation of new Aristotelian ideas, Jacobus remains consistent in his adherence to Augustinian thought in his application of the virtues.

On the Nature of Vice: Bad Rulership

Jacobus has integrated his in-depth knowledge of Augustinian thought throughout the *Legenda aurea*, through his representation of bad rulership. A crucial point of deviation between Augustinian moral theology and Aristotelian philosophy, aside from the obvious relevance of religion to each, is the way in which they conceive of the nature of the vices. These cases examine the way in which Jacobus employs Augustinian thought, as a tool through which to understand, the nature of vice itself and its role in determining bad rulership. The consequences of temporal rulers succumbing to earthly vice are clearly articulated throughout the *Legenda aurea*. Jacobus makes clear that indulging vice is not only an abuse of the role of a temporal ruler, but a distortion of the Christian world order.

Succumbing to earthly concupiscence, or desires, is quite clearly established as contradictory to reason, which is a common indicator of bad temporal rulership. The concept of concupiscence is a feature of Augustinian thought which is used to term the inherent temptation towards evil that was born through humanities sin, and which must be ruled by the sound judgement of reason.⁸⁵ Risto Saarinen provides useful insight into the Augustinian

⁸⁴ For an introduction, see: Roberto Lambertini, “Mirrors for Princes”, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy Between 500 and 1500*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund, 2 vols (Heidelberg: Springer, 2011), 2, 791-97. For an example of such a mirror, see: John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: of the frivolities of courtiers and the footprints of philosophers*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 28: “There is wholly or mainly this difference between the tyrant and the prince: that the latter is obedient to law, and rules his people by a will that places itself at their service ... his will should never be found against justice”.

⁸⁵ For a more detailed definition of Augustine’s conception of concupiscence, see” Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, 312.

conception of concupiscence. He illustrates that Augustine drew a clear connection between concupiscence and sin, but that the sins of an individual were not a product of this desire, but a result of indulging them contrary to the rule of reason.⁸⁶ In the *vitae* of Saint Catherine, Jacobus demonstrates the importance of mediating these earthly temptations, by heeding to the word of reason as revealed by divine truth. Here Catherine prudently preaches to the pagan emperor Maxentius (306-312) in the truths of the Christian faith.⁸⁷ Despite her prudent reasoning, Maxentius would not submit. As is quite common with pagan rulers, the preaching of this saint stirs a fit of rage. Here, Catherine warns Maxentius of the consequences of yielding to these carnal desires: "... [D]o not let yourself be carried away by anger, lest dire disturbance overturn a wise man's mind."⁸⁸ This is a very strong statement about the nature of bad rulership; a tyrant who submits to carnal concupiscence, which in this case takes the form of wrath, is no longer ruled by reason. Catherine goes on to highlight the consequences of succumbing to this vice, remarking to Maxentius, that "if you are ruled by the mind you are a king, if by the body, you are a slave."⁸⁹ The corruption of the basic point of reasoning, caused by succumbing to vice, is a clear sign of tyranny. This characterisation of bad rulership, communicates an important aspect of Augustinian thought on the importance and power of reason in countering carnal concupiscence.

One of the prominent characteristics of bad rulership is pride. This vice is one which Jacobus takes pains to emphasise in his characterisation of bad rulership. Throughout the *Legenda aurea*, pride almost inevitably leads to tyranny. This is the vice often displayed by Pagan rulers who refute the Christian God, putting their own will above that of God. To take one example, Jacobus portrays the biblical king Herod, who was supported by the Romans, fooling the populace of Caesarea into believing him to be a god. "His formidable appearance blinded the eyes of those who gazed upon him, and his artful arrogance deceived them into thinking that there was something more than human about him."⁹⁰ An angel came down and

⁸⁶ Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24.

⁸⁷ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 336: "We have a girl here who has no equal in prudence and understanding. She refutes all our wise men and declares that all our gods are demons ... the girl went on to contradict the orators with the utmost skill and refuted them with a clear and cogent reasoning..."

⁸⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 335-6.

⁸⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 335-6.

⁹⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 35.

struck him instantly, after which his body was eaten by worms for five days.⁹¹ Hence, tyrannical rulers are shown to be corrupted by earthly vice, in this case, pride led to the renunciation and indeed the imitation of God, which is a distortion of the very foundations of the Christian world order. This conception of pride reflects an Augustinian idea, and would have been an important part of Jacobus' theological beliefs. Augustine clearly states that "pride is the beginning of sin ... and what is pride but an appetite for a perverse kind of elevation? For it is a perverse kind of elevation indeed to forsake the foundation upon which the mind should rest."⁹² Hence, this display of pride is not only an abuse of the role of temporal rulership, but also a perversion of the Christian world order. Jacobus weaves these concepts throughout his presentation of bad rulers, demonstrating the dangers of succumbing to earthly concupiscence, and by implication, the benefits of virtue in maintaining the Christian world order.

Examining the way in which the *Legenda aurea* portrays the nature of vices, may offer some insight into the complexity of Jacobus' demonstration of Augustinian thought. The traditional Augustinian conception of the cardinal virtues posits that the virtues are situated within two extremes, which are vices; hence the realization of the virtues is to restrain oneself from the opposing vices, such as pride, avarice and wrath. One of the many things that divided Augustine and Aristotle, however, were their relative positions as to the nature of these opposing vices. Aristotle argued that the opposing vices were merely a lack and excess of the relative virtue.⁹³ Conversely, Augustine asserted that true virtue was the medium between a deficiency and a simulation of a virtue. The simulation of a virtue is, for Augustine, a vice given that it is motivated by worldly concerns rather than divine reward.⁹⁴ When discussing his conception of the cardinal virtues, Jacobus quite explicitly states that:

... virtue, as a middle, stands between two extremes, which are vices. The extremes of prudence are craftiness and foolishness, of temperance, overindulgence and carnal desires and excessive self-mortification; of fortitude, cowardice and rashness; of justice, vindictiveness and excessive leniency.⁹⁵

This conception of the virtues highlights their role in mediating between two earthly vices. Jacobus makes no explicit mention of simulated vices throughout the *Legenda aurea*, although

⁹¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 35.

⁹² Augustine, *City of God*, 608.

⁹³ Aristotle, *The Eudemean Ethics*, trans. Anthony Kenny, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 100. see also *Nicomachean Ethics: Books II-IV*, trans. and intro. C Taylor, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 46.

⁹⁴ Augustine, *City of God against the pagans*, 924-5.

⁹⁵ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 322.

he demonstrates a clear understanding of the Augustinian contempt for false virtue which stems from loving oneself over God.

These vices, which appear in the guise of virtues, are considered by Jacobus to be the worst of all vices. Indeed, lacking the knowledge to achieve good works is less of an aberration than those who possess the knowledge, yet subvert it to achieve impious ends. This position is quite explicitly commented upon in the *vitae* of Saint Macarius, through a divinely augmented talking skull which relays the hierarchy in hell. This reveals that “although pagans are as far down as the distance between heaven and earth, Jews are further down than them and even further still, are false Christians.”⁹⁶ The story of Emperor Julian the Apostate features several times throughout the *Legenda Aurea*.⁹⁷ It is through Julian that Jacobus highlights the dangers of loving oneself over God. Jacobus highlights the great show Julian made of religion and piety, even taking up the monastic habit.⁹⁸ His craftiness is condemned more so than mere foolishness, or imprudence because of this fallacious show of piety. Under this guise, Julian stole gold that had been trusted to him for safe keeping, using it to flee to Rome and procure himself a consulship, and eventually the imperial crown.⁹⁹ Once he had attained the position of emperor, Julian thus dropped his Christian façade and began to persecute Christians. Furthermore, he misused his knowledge of the divine power of the cross, using this knowledge to the detriment of the Christian community. He ordered the destruction of all crosses throughout the empire, in the fear that their power would interfere with his command over the demons.¹⁰⁰ The way in which Julian used his knowledge of the faith to the detriment of the Christian community is considered an abuse of the position of temporal power, hence Julian’s consistent portrayal as a tyrant. This treatment of craftiness is in line with Augustinian thought;

⁹⁶ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 90.

⁹⁷ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 128-9, 283, 337-8; vol. II, 24, 60, 135-7.

⁹⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 128-9.

⁹⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 129: “So Julian got the gold, fled to Rome with it, and by means of it, in time procured the consulship and eventually became emperor”. This story is also recounted in the *vitae* of St. John the Baptist wherein Julian procured his position by the will of Emperor Constantius, who is incidentally another bad ruler, see: Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. II, 135-6.

¹⁰⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. I, 129: “From childhood Julian had been instructed in the arts of magic ... he began to read the incantations of demons ... [w]hen he acceded the empire, he ... destroyed crosses wherever he could find them, and persecuted Christians to the full extent of his power, thinking that otherwise, the demons would be less likely to obey him”.

Julian's vice simulated Christian virtue in that its cause was the product of the incorrect direction of Christian love, loving the self over God.

The representation of temporal rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea* is characterised by a meticulous application of Augustinian moral theology. The prevalence of Augustinian thought throughout the *Legenda aurea* clearly illustrates the extent to which Jacobus' political views were shaped by his theological beliefs. For Jacobus, a good king is essentially, a Christian king, given that true virtue is unattainable without the true direction of Christian love. Rulers who are not governed by the word of God, and hence succumb to the temptation of carnal concupiscence, become corrupted by vice and slaves to the powers of evil. Unable to govern according to the ideals of Christian virtue, these rulers become tyrants, ruling not for the sake of the people, but to satisfy their earthly vices.

The nature of temporal rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea*, is characterised through Jacobus' application of moral theology. Jacobus' characterisation of good and bad rulership reflects a clearly articulated Augustinian conception of the value and role of the virtues within the Christian world. The nature of temporal rulership was, for Jacobus, determined by the extent to which rulers were informed by Christian virtue. Jacobus' model of good rulership demonstrates the purpose of the virtues in ensuring a ruler correctly fulfils their eschatological role in service to society. Despite the Aristotelian ideas circulating, which emphasised the benefits of the virtues outside of the Christian model, Jacobus clearly perceived both true virtue, and good rulership, as that which reflects and reinforces the Christian world order. This Augustinian narrative is reflected through the characterisation of bad rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea*. Succumbing to vice, and the temptation of earthly concupiscence, is demonstrated as a corruption of the laws of basic reasoning. Rulers corrupted by vice are therefore slaves to earthly vice, and unable to fulfil their role in serving their higher purpose. Jacobus used the virtues, as the precepts of moral theology to craft an image of rulership which would inform its audience not only on the nature and value of the virtues within the context of a Christian world view. The strength of the message communicated throughout the *Legenda aurea* about the nature of rulership is supported by meticulously communicated education that teaches of the practical value of Augustinian thought.

Conclusion

Throughout the *Legenda aurea*, rulers play an integral role in securing the salvation of the Christian community through their key function, which is administering temporal justice, and thereby facilitating peace and the righteous existence of the Christian community. In communicating his Augustinian model, Jacobus was not only preaching a political theory, but a comprehensive universal theory bound by Christian theology. The application of moral theology is used to offer an explanation for the divergence in good and bad rulership. Virtues assist rulers in fulfilling their correct role, in administering justice, whilst vices corrupt the reason of rulers, producing tyrannical rulers. By drawing on the very foundations of Christian theology, Jacobus taught that although the power of temporal rulership was divinely ordained, every person was confined to a state of earthly servitude as a consequence of original sin, and was thereby bound by the same precepts of moral theology. Jacobus' political narrative is remarkably wholesome, in that it was preaching about the role of temporal rulership in subjection to, and as an important part in facilitating the correct order of the Christian world. Jacobus communicates a powerful message through the *Legenda aurea*, about the interrelationship of the earthly, and heavenly spheres. The connection noted by Le Goff, that Jacobus forged between divine power and temporal affairs,¹⁰¹ is an integral part of the *Legenda aurea's* message. By fostering the relationship between temporality and divinity, Jacobus closes the divide between the upper echelons of political engagement, and the daily lives and experiences of the people, offering a source connectivity and security in a period of political conflict and change.

This examination of Jacobus' representation of temporal rulership throughout the *Legenda aurea* has proven a fruitful exercise in understanding the nature of Jacobus' political thought. Jacobus reasserted the interrelated nature of the temporal and ecclesiastical powers offering a traditional dualist image of the powers working in harmony with divine will. Given the strained nature of the relationship between ecclesiastical and temporal power, and the alternative theories Jacobus could have followed, it is remarkable that Jacobus chose to adhere to his traditional narrative. Sherry Reames has hypothesised about the popularity of the

¹⁰¹ Le Goff, *In Search of Sacred time*, 22-4, 51-2

Legenda aurea being a result of its political expediency amongst conservative clerics, although does not develop this past a general assumption.¹⁰² She does go as far as characterising the *Legenda aurea* as “powerful propaganda on behalf of the papacy, the mendicants and clerical authority in general”.¹⁰³ Whilst this research has highlighted the value Jacobus puts on the protection of the Church liberties and property, it has not shown an argument in support of a hierocratic model of power in support of the papacy, but a rather more traditional Augustinian perspective on the mechanics of temporal power. The *Legenda aurea* would have been a substantial vehicle for the transmission of traditional political thought, running quite contrary to the papal argument. Given Jacobus’ position, it cannot be said that Jacobus was writing in ignorance of these theories. Rather, it is proposed that Jacobus was consciously offering a narrative in opposition to a radical papal supremacy, in favour of a more traditional inclusive model, wherein each is assigned their respective role and jurisdiction by God.

Throughout the *Legenda aurea*, Jacobus clearly adheres to a traditional Augustinian mould of thought, his conception of temporal rulership being unaffected by the introduction of new Aristotelian ideas. This is quite a striking feature of his work. Not only was Jacobus supporting a traditional Augustinian theory of power, but he was propagating it through a very powerful source. Although the *Legenda aurea* is said to have only been intended as a model for preachers, this alone is the ideal way to disseminate information to the people. The *Legenda aurea* however, became the more widely read text from the thirteenth-century, through until at least the fifteenth century. This would have made the *Legenda aurea* a very powerful influence on popular conceptions political thought. Hence, this research suggests that although there was certainly a reintroduction of Aristotelian ideas in the thirteenth century, the political narratives propagated to the wider population through the *Legenda aurea*, would have seen a revival in popular Augustinian thought. Although they may not have recognised the philosophical complexities as it was presented to them, the precepts of Augustinian thought would have been fundamental in shaping people’s understanding of the role of temporal power and its relationship to them, the Church and divine will. Those who read, or listened to the *Legenda aurea*, would have been absorbing, through the magic of saintly tales, the theology of Augustine, and with it, his conception of the nature of Christian universe.

¹⁰² Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination*, 203.

¹⁰³ Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination*, 203.

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